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ON PIETY AND TRUE PHILOSOPHY

A DISCOURSE OF HERMES TO TAT

(*From the Corpus Hermeticum*)

*Introduction**

This discourse is sometimes placed at the beginning of the Teachings of Hermes: a position evidently given because of the fundamental character of the subject. Piety and philosophy are essential requisites for the perfect life, and without them man can never attain union with the Divine.

The philosophy which is here presented is not given in the ordinary systematic form, but makes use of the method of contrast by introducing a series of pairs of opposites, such as heaven and earth, God and man, good and evil, incorruption and corruption, the unchangeable and the changeable, in most of which the absolute is contrasted with the relative. The purpose of this method is clearly to emphasize the need for man to devote himself to piety and philosophy which ever seek the Divine, the real and the ideal.

The discourse is not addressed to the logical aspect of the mind, but to the simple perceptive power to which the truth of the statements is self-evident.

Other discourses of Hermes expound the various aspects of the "Heads" introduced here, show the relation between the contrasted pairs, and reconcile any apparent contradictions.

Text

Hermes. I write this, O my Son, both for the love of man and piety to God.

* By the Editors of *The Shrine of Wisdom*.

There can be no religion more true than to meditate on the things that are and to give thanks for them to Him Who made them, and this I will never cease to do.

Tat. What then should a man do, O Father, to live wisely, if nothing here is true?

Hermes. He must be pious, my Son, for he that is pious attaineth to the height of philosophy: and without philosophy it is impossible to attain the height of piety.

He who learns the things that are, and how they are ordered and governed, and by whom and for what purpose, will give thanks to the Demiurgus, as to a good father, an excellent nurse, and a guardian who can always be trusted.

He that gives thanks will be pious, and he that is pious shall know both where the truth is and what it is, and learning that he will grow more and more pious.

For never, my Son, can the soul which while in the body lifts itself up to know the True and Good fall back into the contrary; for when it once knows its Father it is filled with wondrous love, forgets all evils, and can no longer depart from the Good.

Let this, my Son, be the consummation of piety—to which if thou attain, thou shalt both live well and be blessed in thy death, for then thy soul will not be ignorant whither it should wing its flight again.

This only, my Son, is the path that leads to truth, which our progenitors travelled and by which, having made their journey, they attained to the Good. It is a holy and divine path, yet difficult for the soul to travel while still in the body.

For first the soul must fight against its own lower nature, and after much strife it must ensure that the victory is gained by the one part; since there is a contest of the one against the two.* The one struggles to mount upward, but the two strive to drag it down.

Their victory is not alike, for the one hastens to the good, but the others towards evil: the one aspires to be free; the others are content with their slavery.

If the two be overcome they become quiet and are content to

* The "one" is the rational principle; the "two" the irascible and desiderative aspects of the irrational nature.

accept the one as their ruler: but if the one be overcome by the two it is led by them into punishment in the life here below.

This is, my Son, the guide in the path that leads Thither. Thou must first dominate thy body before thy end can be reached, and gain the victory in this life of conflict, and when thou hast overcome, return home.

And now, my Son, I will go through all the things that are by heads: understand thou what I say and remember what thou hearest.

All corporeal things are moved, only that which is incorporeal is immovable. Every body is subject to change, but not all bodies are dissolvable, some bodies only are dissolvable.

Not every living thing is mortal; not every living thing is immortal. That which can be dissolved can also be destroyed. That which always abides is unchangeable; that which is unchangeable is eternal. That which is continually being generated is continually being corrupted; but that which is created but once is never corrupted, nor does it become any other thing.

First God; second the Cosmos; third Man.

The Cosmos for Man's sake; and Man for God's.

The irrational nature of man is mortal, his rational nature is immortal.

Every essence is immortal; every essence is unchangeable.

Every thing that exists is two-fold; nothing that exists is permanent.

Not all things are moved by soul, but soul moves all that exists.*

Every thing that suffers is sensible; every thing that is sensible suffers.

Every thing that suffers also enjoys and is a mortal creature, but that which enjoys and yet suffers not, is an eternal being.

Not every body is subject to disease; every body that is subject to disease is dissolvable.

The mind (nous) is in God; the reasoning faculty is in man. Reason is in the mind; the mind is above all suffering.

* To "exist" is to stand out: that from which anything stands out is said to subsist.

Nothing that is corporeal is real; all that is incorporeal is free from unreality.

Everything that becomes is changeable; but not everything that becomes need be dissolved.

Nothing is good upon earth; nothing is bad in heaven.

God is good; man is bad.

Good is voluntary; evil is involuntary.

The Gods choose good, as good; man chooses bad imagining it to be good.

The Divine law is good; the good law is *the* law.

For the Cosmos time is revolving movement; for man time is duration.

Whatever is in heaven is unchangeable; whatever is upon earth is changeable.

Nothing in heaven is enslaved; nothing upon earth is free.

Nothing in heaven is unknowable; nothing upon earth is knowable.

The things upon earth do not consort with those in heaven.

All things in heaven are without blemish; all things on earth may be marred by blemishes.

The immortal is not mortal; the mortal is not immortal.

That which is sown does not invariably come forth; that which comes forth must invariably have been sown.

Corruptible bodies have two times: from sowing until birth, and from birth until death; but of an incorruptible body, the time is from coming into being alone.

Things subject to dissolution are increased and diminished.

Dissoluble matter is changed into contraries: corruption and generation; but incorruptible matter into itself, or things like to itself.

The birth of man is the beginning of his corruption; the corruption of man is the beginning of his generation.

That which ends, begins; that which begins, ends.

Of things that are, some are in essence, some in ideas, and some in activity or operation.

Whatever things belong to operation are in bodies.

The immortal receives nothing from the mortal; the mortal receives from the immortal.

The mortal does not enter into the immortal; the immortal enters into the mortal.

Activities do not move upwards, but downwards.

The things on earth do not bestow benefits upon those in heaven; the things in heaven bestow benefits upon those on earth.

Heaven is the container of everlasting bodies; earth of perishable bodies.

Earth is irrational; heaven is rational.

Celestial things are subject to Providence; terrestrial things are subject to necessity.

Heaven is the first element; earth is the last element.

Providence is the Divine order; necessity is subservient to Providence. Fortune is the effect of that which is without apparent order.

What is God? The Good that nothing can change.

What is man? The bad that can be changed.

If thou perfectly rememberest these heads, thou wilt also remember those things which I have expounded unto thee more fully, for these are the summaries or syntheses of them.

Avoid, however, speaking of them to the multitude; not that I would deprive them of this knowledge, but that rather I would not have thee subject to the ridicule of the multitude.

For the like always attracts to itself the like, but the unlike never agrees with the unlike. Such discourses as these should have very few hearers, and probably even the few may not be worthy to hear them. They have some power peculiar to themselves, for they provoke the wicked to do more evil. Therefore it behoveth thee to protect the multitude from them, as not understanding their virtue and power.

Tat. What dost thou mean, my Father?

Hermes. This, my Son! Mankind is very prone to do evil, to be attracted to it, and to be delighted with it. Now if an impious man should learn that the world was once made, and that all things come and go according to Providence and necessity, and that necessity and fate rule over all things, will he not grow much worse than he is now; despising the world because it was made, attributing to fate the cause of all evil, and never ceasing from doing evil?

Therefore care should be taken of such kind of people, that, being in ignorance of these things, they may be less evil for fear of that which is unknown.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Krishna Gautami had an only son, who, when he began to walk, died. Her grief was so great that she carried the dead child in her arms from house to house to her pitying neighbours, asking them to give her medicine for it. The people said, "She has lost her reason: the boy is dead." But at last she met a man who replied to her request: "I myself have no such medicine as you ask for, but I know of one who has." "O tell me who that is," said Krishna Gautami, and was told: "The Buddha can give you medicine."

Krishna Gautami went to Buddha and cried: "Lord and Master, give me the medicine that will cure my boy." Buddha answered: "Yes I know of some, bring me a handful of mustard-seed." And when the girl eagerly promised to bring it, Buddha added: "You must get it from some house where no son or daughter, or husband or wife, or parent, or friend has died." Krishna Gautami then went from house to house and the people said: "Here is mustard-seed, take it!" But when she asked: "Did a son or daughter, husband or wife, parent or friend, die in your family?" they answered her: "Alas! the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our loss."

At last, not being able to find a single house where no one had died, her mind began to clear, and she considered the fate of men, that their lives flicker up and are extinguished. She thought: how selfish am I in my grief! Death is common to all.

Summoning up her courage, she had the dead body of her child buried in the forest and, returning to Buddha, paid him homage. Buddha said to her: "Have you the mustard-seed?" "My Lord," she replied, "I have not; the people tell me that the living are few, but the dead are many." Then he explained to her of the impermanency of life in this world, and that there is no means whereby those who are born can avoid death. Her doubts having been cleared away, she took refuge in Buddha and found comfort in the good Law.

THE DIVINE NAMES*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Chapter V

Concerning Being and also concerning Paradigms

Now we must pass on to the name of Being; truly given by the theologians to Him Who truly is. But it must be remembered that it is not the purpose of this treatise to reveal the Superessential Being in Its superessential nature (for this is inexpressible and unknown and wholly unmanifested, and even surpasses union itself) but to celebrate the emanation of the Essential Principle of the Godhead Which creates the essences of all things in the whole universe. For the Divine Name of Good, as revealing all the emanations of the Universal Cause is extended both to the things which are and the things which are not, and is above that which is and that which is not. But the Name of Being is extended to all beings and is above essence; again, the Name of Life is extended to all that lives and is above life; and the Name of Wisdom is extended to all intellectual, rational and sensible beings and is above them all.

This treatise, then, seeks to celebrate the Names of God which shew forth the Divine Providence. It does not profess to describe the Absolute, Superessential Goodness, the Being, Life, and Wisdom of the Absolute, Superessential Deity Which, as the Scripture says, is established in the secret places, above all Goodness and Deity and Essence and Wisdom and Life; but it celebrates the beneficent Providence Which has been revealed as transcendent Goodness and Cause of all good things, and as Being, Life, and Wisdom, as Producing Cause of essence, and life, and Giver of wisdom to those that partake of essence, life, intellect, reason, and sense-perception. But it does not say that Goodness is one thing and that Being is a different thing, and that Life is other than Wisdom, or that

* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 96 to 102.

there are many Causes and that some Godheads produce some things while others produce other things, some pre-eminently, others in a subordinate manner, but we say that the whole of the Good Emanations and the Divine Names which we celebrate are all of the One God, and that the first Name declares the whole Providence of the One God, while the other Names set forth His more general and more particular Providences.

But someone may say : why is being considered to be superior to life and life to wisdom, when living things are clearly above things that merely exist, and above and next to these are those having sense-perception, above these the rational, and above the rational the intellectual which are pre-eminently around God and nearer to Him? Surely those things which participate more fully in the gifts of God must be of greater dignity and above the rest?

Now this might rightly be said if intellectual beings were held to be without being or life. But if the Divine Intelligences are above all other beings and live in a more excellent manner than all other living beings, and have intellectual power and knowledge above all reason and sense-perception, and aspire to and participate in the Beautiful and the Good in a manner beyond all beings, they surround the Good more closely, they have a more abundant participation in It, and have received more and greater gifts from It. Thus also rational beings, because of the superiority of reason, are placed above those which have only sense-perception, and these in turn excel others by reason of their sense-perception, and others excel by reason of life. And this, I think, is the truth : that the more anything participates in the One and infinitely bountiful God, the nearer it draws to Him and the more divine it is and the more it excels the rest.

Having discussed this matter, let us now celebrate the Good as That Which truly Is, Giver of Essence to all beings. He Who Is, is through His Power the superessential substantial Cause of all beings and Creator of being, principle, substance, essence, nature; Source and Measure of eternity; Reality beyond time; Eternity of beings; Time of all that comes into being; the 'to be' of all things, whatsoever their manner of being; Origin of all things, howsoever brought into being. From Him Who Is are eternity, essence, being, time, generation, that which is gene-

rated, the essence in all beings, and all things whatever which have subsistence or existence.

How, then, can God possibly be a being, since He is absolutely unconditioned, embracing and fore-containing the whole of being in Himself? Hence He is called King of Eternity, since by Him and around Him the whole of being is and subsists.

And He neither was, nor will be, nor became, nor is becoming, nor will become; rather He is not; but He is the "to be" of all beings, and not only are all beings, but also the very essence of all beings, from Him Who is before all ages. For He is the Eternity of eternities, the First, before all ages.

Let us then repeat that all beings and all ages have their being from the Pre-subsistent. From Him are all eternity and time, and the Pre-subsistent is the Principle and Cause of all ages and times and of all beings of every kind. All things participate in Him and from nothing does He stand aloof. He is before all things and all things subsist in Him and, in general, if anything is in any manner whatsoever, it is and is thought and is preserved in the Pre-subsistent.

And before all other participations, that of being is first; and Being Itself is prior to the being of Life Itself and to the being of Wisdom Itself and to the being of the Divine Sameness Itself. And all other beings, in whatever else they participate, participate first in being. And the principles of all things, in which all beings participate, themselves participate in Being Itself, and there is nothing of which Being Itself is not the essence and eternity.

Therefore God is celebrated in a more excellent manner above all things, from the first of His gifts, as Being; for as pre-subsistent and super-subsistent and excellent and super-excellent in Being He pre-established all Being—I mean Being Itself, and subordinated all things, whatever their mode of existence, to Being Itself. For the principles of existing things all participate in being, therefore they both are, and are principles; and first are, then are principles. And if you wish to say that Life Itself is the principle of life to all the living as such, and Sameness Itself is the principle of sameness to all things that are similar as such, and Unity Itself to all things that are united as such, and Order Itself to all things that are ordered as such, and similarly with all the rest which, through participating in this

or in that or in both or in many of these principles are this or that or both or many, you will find that of these participations, the first is the participation in being and thus in the first place they are what they are, then they are principles of being to this or that; hence, through their own participation in being, they have being and impart being to others. And if these principles subsist through their participation in being, so much the more do the many exist through participation in these principles.

The Absolute Goodness Itself, as pouring forth the first gift of Being Itself, is named from this more ancient and primal participation. And from It and in It are Being Itself and the Principles of all things that are. And all beings and every mode of existence are sustained by It, and this is an omnipotent, all-comprehensive Unity. Similarly in a monad every member pre-exists as a unit, and the monad holds every number in itself singly and in it every number is united, but in proceeding from it is differentiated and multiplied. And at the centre of a circle all the radii are brought together in a single unity and this point holds within itself all the radii united to one another and to the one origin from which they proceeded. And in the centre they are perfectly united, but at a short distance from it they are separated, and the greater their distance from the centre, the greater their separation, and in short, the nearer they are to the centre, the more they are united to it and to one another, and the further from the centre, the further apart they are from one another.

Furthermore, all the several principles in nature are united in the whole nature of the universe in an unconfused union. And in the soul the powers which provide for every part of the body are united in a oneness. It is not unfitting, therefore, that ascending from faint images to the Cause of all, we should contemplate with supermundane vision all things, even opposite things, as unified and united in the Cause of all. For It is the Principle of all principles, from Which are Being Itself and all things, whatsoever their mode of being; every principle, every end, every life, immortality, wisdom, order, harmony, power, protection, stability, distribution, intellect, reason, sense-perception, quality, rest, motion, union, mixture, friendship, agreement, difference, every limit, all principles of whatever kind which, possessing being, characterize all things.

From the same universal Cause are the intelligible and intellectual essences of the Godlike angels and of souls and all the natures in the universe, and all things which are said to exist either in other things or in thought. Even the all-holy and most venerable Powers which are truly essential, established as it were in the vestibule of the Superessential Trinity, are from It and in It, and have in and from It their being and their Godlike nature. And next the angels below Them, having it in a lower degree, the lowest possessing it in the lowest degree among angels, though compared with ourselves they possess it in a supermundane manner.

And souls and all other beings have, according to the same law, their being and their well-being, and are and are good because they have from the pre-subsistent One their being and their well-being, and in Him are their being and their well-being. From Him is their beginning, in Him their preservation and final attainment. And He imparts being in the highest measure to those most exalted Beings Whom the Scriptures call eternal. But all things continually have being and even that which is self-existent is from the Pre-subsistent. Being is from Him, He is not from being; being is in Him, He is not in Being; He does not receive being, being receives from Him*; and He is the Eternity, the Source and Measure of being, above Essence and true Being and Eternity: essence-creating Principle and Middle and End of all things.

On this account, He Who truly pre-subsists is named in the Scriptures from many kinds of being and in accordance with all conditions of being, thus He is rightly celebrated as the 'Was', the 'Is', the 'Will be', the 'Became', the 'Becomes', and the 'Will become'. For all these indicate to those who understand their Divine significance that He is super-essential and the Cause of every mode of existence. For He is not this, but not that; nor is He after this manner, but not after that; rather, He is the All as Cause of all and as embracing and fore-containing in Himself the beginnings and ends of all things. And He is above all as super-essentially transcending all that is. Hence all things may be predicated of Him, severally and at once, but He is none of them. He is of every form and shape, yet is formless, without

* Since He is the Unity above all being, being receives its unity from Him.

being, fore-embracing omnipotently and pre-eminently in Himself the beginnings, middles and ends of all things, and as the One and absolutely unitive Cause, shedding His pure radiance of Being upon all things.

For as our sun, while remaining one and shedding a uniform light, renews the substances and qualities of sensible existences, however many and various they may be, and nourishes, preserves, perfects, differentiates, unites, warms, fructifies, and makes productive all existing things and causes them to grow and change, to take root and bud forth, quickens them and gives them life, so that each one of the whole partakes in its own manner of one and the same sun, and the one sun fore-contains in itself unitively the causes of the many participants, much more must it be admitted of the very Cause of the sun and of all things that the paradigms of all things pre-substist in It in one super-essential Unity; since It sends forth essences according to a progression from Essence.

We say that paradigms are those Ideas* which, pre-substisting in God as a unity, produce the essences of all things, and which are called in theology 'predeterminations'; Divine and good Wills, ordinative and creative, by which the Super-essential One pre-ordained and brought into being the whole universe.

And although the philosopher Clement may consider that the name 'paradigm' should be given to the most primary of beings, he develops his theme by means of names which are not the most perfect, the principal, or the simplest. But even if this is granted to be rightly said, we must remember the Scripture which says: 'I have not shown thee these things that thou mightest go after them,' but that through our analogical understanding of them we might be led, so far as is possible, to the universal Cause.

To It, then, must be attributed all things in one all-transcendent Unity, inasmuch as leading forth Being, the creative Emanation and Goodness, and penetrating all things, and filling all things with Its own Being, and rejoicing in all beings, It fore-embraces all things in Itself, exempt from all duality in the transcendent simplicity of Its Unity.

But It contains all things in the same manner according to Its all-pervading Infinity, and is participated by all things indivi-

* The word translated 'Idea' is 'Logos.'

dually, even as a voice, while one and the same, is received in its unity by many ears.

The Pre-subsistent, therefore, is the Beginning and the End of all things: the Beginning as their Cause, the End as their Attainment. And He is the Bound of all things and the Infinity of all things, transcending all bound and all infinity so far as they are opposites. For, as has often been said, He fore-embraces and creates all things in Unity, and is present to all things everywhere according to the One and the Same and the Self-same, and going forth into all things while yet remaining in Himself; and at rest and in motion, yet neither resting nor moving, without beginning, middle, or end. He is not in any existing thing, nor is He any individual thing, nor does He possess any attribute or temporal things. He is exempt from time and eternity and all that is in time and eternity, inasmuch as Eternity Itself, and all that is, and the measures of all things, and all things that are measured, are through Him and from Him. But let us speak more appropriately of these things elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI

Concerning Life

Now let us praise the Eternal Life from Which comes Life Itself and all life, and from Which is imparted to all things, howsoever they participate in life, the life appropriate to each.

Now the life of the immortal angels and their immortality, their indestructible nature, their angelic perpetual motion, are and subsist from It and for Its sake. Wherefore they are called ever-living and immortal, and yet not immortal, because they have not from themselves their immortal being and eternal life, but they proceed from the life-giving Cause Which creates and sustains all life. And just as we spoke of Him Who Is as the essential Eternity of Being Itself, so do we now say that the Divine Life above all life is Life Itself and is the life-giver and sustainer of all life. And all life and vital movement come from that Life Which is above all life. From It souls have their immortality and all animals and plants have their life as a distant echo of that Life. And when this is taken away, all life fails, as the Scripture says, and even those who have failed, through

their incapacity to participate in Its immortality, receive life once more when they turn again to It.

And It gives first to the self-subsistent life its essential life, and to the whole of life and to each living being It gives that which is adapted to its own nature: to the supercelestial lives the immaterial and the Godlike, a changeless immortality, and their unswerving and inerrant perpetual motion, while Its boundless outflowing through Its all-prolific Goodness extends even to the life of daemons. For daemons have not their existence and life and perpetuation from any other cause than this. Moreover It imparts to men such a measure of angelic life as their composite nature can receive, and through Its overflowing love for man It turns and calls us, when we have strayed from It, back to Itself and, more divinely still, It has promised to transform us wholly—our souls and the bodies joined to them—to a perfect life and immortality: a fact which perhaps to the Ancients seemed unnatural, but to me and to thee and to the truth seems Divine and above nature—that is to say, above our visible nature, not above that omnipotent Nature of Divine Life. For to this Life, being the nature of all living things, and especially the more divine of these, no life is unnatural or supernatural.

Therefore the foolish and controversial words of Simon* must be banished from the company of the godly and from thy holy soul. For while thinking himself wise, he overlooked, I think, the truth that no man of balanced mind should use the order of that which is evident to the senses as a means for attacking the invisible Cause of all. And we must answer him that it is his statement that is against nature, since nothing is contrary to the Cause of all.

From this eternal Life all animals and plants are filled with life and energy; and whether you speak of life as intellectual, or rational, or sensitive, or vegetative life, or merely increment, or whatever kind of life, or principle of life, or essence of life it may be, it has its being from This Which is above every life; and from It both lives and imparts life; and in It pre-subsists unitedly as in its Cause. For the super-vital Life and life-giving Source of Life is the Cause of all life, the Producer of life, the Fulfiller of life, and the Differentiator of life. And the attributes

* Simon denied the resurrection of the body.

of every kind of life must be predicated of It in accordance with Its prolific generation of life and the multiform variety under which It is seen and acclaimed in all life, and because It is in need of nothing, but is rather the Super-plenitude of Life, Super-vital, or whatever other name can be humanly applied to the Ineffable Life.

CHAPTER VII

Concerning Wisdom, Intellect, Reason, Truth, Faith

Now, if you are willing, let us celebrate the Good and Eternal Life both as Wise and as Wisdom Itself, or rather as the Source of all wisdom, established above all wisdom and intelligence.

For not only is God the Super-plenitude of Wisdom and Infinite in Intelligence, but He also transcends all reason, intelligence, and wisdom. And knowing this by divinely inspired understanding, that truly divine man, the sun both to us and to our teacher, says 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men.' For not only is all human thought a kind of error when compared with the unchanging stability of the Divine and Perfect Intelligence, but also because the theologians frequently speak of the attributes of God in a negative mode and a contrary sense. Thus the Scriptures call the all-resplendent Light invisible, and Him Whose praises are sung in many titles and names, ineffable and nameless, and Him Who is present with all things and to be known through them all, incomprehensible and past finding out. In the same way the divine Apostle calls the foolishness of God that which appears unreasonable and extraordinary but which foreshadows the ineffable Truth Which is before all reason. But, as I have said elsewhere, by receiving the things which are above in a manner corresponding to our own nature, and surrounding ourselves with that which is familiar to sense perceptions, and interpreting Divine things according to human standards, we are led astray by following the apparent meaning of the Divine and mystical teachings. But we ought to know that while our mind has the power of thought through which it perceives that which is intellectual, yet it is united to That Which is above itself by a union far transcending the nature of the mind. It is in this transcendent manner that

Divine truths are to be understood and not in the ordinary human sense. We must wholly lose ourselves and be wholly re-born in God. For it is far better to belong to God than to ourselves, since the Divine gifts will be theirs who are born in God.

Speaking then in a mystical manner of this foolish Wisdom Which is beyond reason and intellect, let us say that It is the Cause of all intellect and reason and all wisdom and understanding, and of It is all counsel, and from It all knowledge and understanding, and in It are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For it follows from what has already been said that the super-wise and all-wise Cause is the Source of Wisdom Itself both universal and particular.

From It the intelligible and intellectual powers of the angelic minds have their unitive and blessed contemplations, not gathering their divine knowledge part by part, or from parts, or from sense-perceptions, or discursive reasoning, nor united by anything akin to these, but pure from all materiality and multiplicity they contemplate the intelligible truth of the Divine Intellect immaterially and intuitively in union with the Divine. And their intellectual power and energy shine forth with unmingled and undefiled purity and receive the Divine contemplations unitively and indivisibly and immaterially, being formed by that God-like unity, through the Divine Wisdom, as far as possible in the likeness of the Divine All-wise Intellect and Reason.

And souls have reason by means of which they circle discursively, moving around the truth of things, and through their partitive and manifold variety are lower than the unitive Intelligences. Yet, by the unification of their many powers, intuitions are granted like those of the angels, so far as is attainable to souls.

And even our sense-perceptions would not wrongly be called an echo of Wisdom; even the daemonic mind, in so far as it is mind, is from Wisdom, but in so far as it is irrational, not knowing or willing to attain that which it seeks, we must call it more correctly a declination from Wisdom.

We have said that the Divine Wisdom is the Fount, the Cause, the Root, the Perfecter, the Guardian and the Goal of Wisdom Itself and all wisdom, mind, reason, and sense-per-

ception. How then can God Himself Who is above wisdom be named Wisdom, Mind, Reason, and Knowledge? How can He have intelligence of intelligibles if He is above intellectual energies? Or how can He know sensible objects since He is established above all sense-perception? And yet the Scriptures say that He knows all things and that nothing escapes the Divine Knowledge. But, as I have often said, we must contemplate Divine things in a manner appropriate to that which is Divine. For through excess, not through defect, must God be said to be without mind or senses, just as we deny reason of Him Who is above reason, and perfection of the super-perfect and pre-perfect One, and attribute the intangible and invisible darkness to the Light Which is unapproachable because It so greatly exceeds the light which is visible. In like manner the Divine Intellect embraces all things in Its wholly transcendent knowledge, fore-knowing all things within Itself as Cause of all—knowing and leading forth angels before angels came into being and knowing all other things essentially and, so to speak, from the Principle Itself, and thus bringing them into being. And this, I think, is taught by the Scripture when it says ‘Who knoweth all things before they are born.’ For the Divine Intellect knows all things not through gaining knowledge from existing things, but It causally fore-contains and fore-comprehends from Itself and in Itself the knowledge and wisdom and essence of all things; not considering each thing according to its idea, but knowing and uniting all things in one causal embrace—even as light, as cause, pre-supposes in itself the notion of darkness, since darkness is only known by reason of light.

The Divine Wisdom, therefore, in knowing Itself, will know all things: material things immaterially, the divisible indivisibly, the manifold unitively; knowing and bringing forth all things in Its own Unity. For if God, as the One Cause, imparts being to all things He will, according to the same unitive Cause, know all things as being from Himself and as anteriorly pre-subsisting in Himself, and will not receive from the things themselves His knowledge of them, but to each He will impart knowledge of itself and of the others. God, therefore, has not one particular kind of knowledge of Himself and another kind universally embracing all beings; for the Cause of all, in know-

ing Himself, will by no means be ignorant of that which has proceeded from Himself, of which He is Cause.

After this manner, then, God knows all things: not by knowing the things, but by knowing Himself. For, as the Scriptures say, the angels also know the things of earth, not through sense-perception, though they are the objects of sense-perception, but by virtue of the power and nature of a God-like mind.

Furthermore we must ask, 'how do we know God, since He can be perceived neither by the mind nor the senses, nor is He any of the things in the universe?' Perhaps it may truly be said that we do not know God in His own Nature (for His Nature is unknown and transcends all reason and mind) yet, as I said, we may know Him even from all things, for He is, as the Scriptures say, the Producer of all, eternally harmonizing all, and is the Cause of the indissoluble agreement and order of all, eternally uniting the ends of primary things to the beginnings of secondary things and beautifying the one symphony and harmony of the universe.

And God is called Word in the sacred Scriptures, not only because He is the Imparter of reason, intellect, and wisdom, but also because He fore-contains the causes of all things unitively in Himself, and because He permeates all things, reaching, as the Scriptures say, to the end of all things; and more especially because the Divine Word is simple beyond all simplicity and is above all things according to Its super-essential and absolute Nature. This Word is the simple and essentially subsisting Truth around Which, as the pure and infallible knowledge of the whole, the Divine Faith subsists, the abiding foundation of the truly faithful, which establishes all things in the truth and the truth in them by an immutable sameness through which they have a pure knowledge of the truth which they believe. For if knowledge unites the knower and the known, but ignorance is always to the ignorant a cause of change and separation from himself, nothing will move him who believes in the truth according to the sacred Word from his attitude of true faith in which he shall abide in changeless sameness. For he well knows who is united to the truth that it is well with him, even though the multitude reproach him as going out of his mind, for it probably escapes their notice that he is a wanderer, going out into Truth through real faith. But he himself

truly knows himself to be not, as they imagine, insane, but set free from his wavering and ever-changing movement about the manifold variety of error through that Truth Which is simple, self-permanent, and forever the same.

Thus the first of our teachers of the Divine Wisdom are ready to die daily for the truth, testifying by every word and deed to that single, true knowledge of Christians which is most simple and most divine of all—or rather, the only true, simple, and unitive knowledge of God.

(To be continued)

ON THE FUTILITY OF GRIEF

Extract from a Letter of the Emperor Julian to Amerios

It is reported that Demokrites of Abdera, finding nothing that he said could console Darius for the loss of his beautiful wife, promised to restore her life if the King would supply him with all things necessary for the purpose. Darius ordered him to spare no expense, but to take whatever was requisite to perform his promise. Soon after Demokrites told him that "everything was ready for the completion of the work except one only, which he knew not how to procure; but that Darius as he was king of all Asia would perhaps find no difficulty in providing it." On his asking what this important requisite was, Demokrites is said to have replied: "If you will inscribe on the tomb of your wife the names of three who have never known affliction she will immediately return to life, this ceremony being irresistible." Darius hesitating, and not being able to recollect any one who had not experienced some sorrow, Demokrites said to him: "and are you not the most absurd of men, ashamed still to lament, as if you alone were involved in such distress, when you cannot find one that ever lived exempt from affliction."

JEWELS

It is impossible that he can be free who is a slave to his passions. —*Pythagoric.*

Intemperance is the vice of the desiderative part of the soul, through which men engage in depraved pleasures. —*Aristotle.*

The theorems of philosophy are to be enjoyed as much as possible, as if they were ambrosia and nectar. For the pleasure arising from them is genuine, incorruptible, and divine. —*Pythagoric.*

He who loves the goods of the soul will love things more divine; but he who loves the goods of its transient habitation will love things human. —*Democrates.*

The friendship of one wise man is better than that of every fool. —*Ibid.*

O Thou Truth unchangeable, Light of mine eyes, Eternal Wisdom, Righteousness and Peace, O all my good, my strength and my praise: along with Thee do I run in freedom, and without Thee I am exceeding constrained on every side. I, a little child, a poor one, Thy servant, useless within and without, the least in my Father's house, on the bended knees of my heart and my body, salute Thee from afar, for my purity is not great enough for me to be firmly fastened to Thee. Take away the veil, cleanse my countenance, that I may clearly behold Thee: and that when the darkness of my heart has been put to flight, my soul may rejoice and exult in Thy divine light, run quickly on its way and with sweet delight may praise and exalt Thee. —*Gerlac Petersen.*

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY*

PROCLUS

Proposition CLXXXVI

Every soul is both an incorporeal essence and separable from body

For if it knows itself, but every thing which knows itself is converted to itself, and that which is converted to itself is neither body, since every body is without conversion to itself, nor is iseparable from body, since that which is inseparable from body is not naturally adapted to revert to itself, as it would thus be separated from body; if this be the case, every soul is neither a corporeal essence nor inseparable from body. Moreover, that the soul knows itself is evident: for if it knows the natures that are above itself, and is also naturally adapted to know itself, it will in a much greater degree know itself through the causes prior to itself.

Proposition CLXXXVII

Every soul is indestructible and incorporeal

For every thing which can in any way whatever be dissolved and destroyed is either corporeal and composite, or is allotted its hypostasis in a subject. And that indeed, which is dissolved, is corrupted as consisting of many things. But that which is naturally adapted to be in another thing vanishes into non-entity when separated from its subject. Moreover, the soul is incorporeal, and external to every subject, subsisting in itself and being converted to itself. Hence it is indestructible and incorporeal.

* For previous sections, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 102.

Proposition CLXXXVIII

Every soul is both life and vital

For that to which soul accedes necessarily lives, and that which is deprived of soul is immediately left destitute of life. Either, therefore, it lived through soul, or through something else, and not through soul. It is, however, impossible that it should have lived through something else alone: for every thing which is participated, either imparts itself, or something pertaining to itself, to its participant. But if it imparts neither of these, it will not be participated. Soul, however, is participated by that to which it is present, and that which participates of soul is said to be animated.

If, therefore, that which is participated introduces life to animated natures it is either life, or vital alone, or both life and vital. If, however, soul is alone vital, but not also life, it will consist both of life and non-life. It will not therefore know itself, nor be converted to itself. For knowledge is life, and the gnostic power so far as it is such is vital. If, therefore, there is anything in soul without life, this will not possess essentially the power of knowing. But if soul is life alone, it will no longer participate of the intellectual life. For the participant of life is vital and is not life alone—that is, the first and imparticipable life; but the life which is posterior to this is both vital and life. Soul, however, is not imparticipable life. Hence soul is at the same time both life and vital.

Proposition CLXXXIX

Every soul is self-vital

For if it is converted to itself, but every thing which is converted to itself is self-subsistent, the soul also is self-subsistent, and produces itself. But it is likewise life and vital, and its hyparxis is according to vitality; for soul imparts life by its very being to the natures to which it is present: and if the participant is adapted to receive, it immediately becomes animated and vital—soul, in effecting this, not reasoning, nor acting from deliberate choice, nor vivifying by cogitation and judgment, but by its very essence and by that which it is, supplying the participant with life. Hence the being of soul is the same as

to live. If, therefore, the soul possesses being from itself, and this is the same as *to live*, and it has life essentially, it will impart life to itself, and will possess it from itself. This, therefore, being admitted, soul will be self-vital.

(*To be continued*)

SEED THOUGHTS

THE INDIVISIBLE

That the Indistant and Unextended Deity is the Whole of It present in infinite parts of the distant world, neither divided, as applying part to part; nor yet multiplied into many wholes, according to the multiplicity of those things that partake thereof. But the whole of it (one and the same in number) is present to all the parts of the bulky world, and to every one of those many things in it, undividedly and unmultipliedly; that in the meantime partaking thereof dividedly.

—*Porphyrius*.

All Corporeal Substance is simply divisible, some parts of it being here and some there, but Intellectual Substance, is indivisible, and without dimensions, though it hath much of depth and profundity in it in another sense.

—*Simplicius*.

God is not in time, but above time, in Eternity. Forasmuch as time is always scattered and stretched out in length and distance, one moment following after another; but Eternity remaineth in the same, without any flux, and yet nevertheless outgoeth time, and transcendeth the flux thereof, though seeming to be stretched and spun out more into length.

—*Plotinus*.

Virtuous is the man who relieves the corporeal wants of others, who wipes away the tear of sorrow, and gives agony repose; but more virtuous he who, by disseminating wisdom, expels ignorance from the soul, and thus benefits the immortal part of man.

—*Thomas Taylor*.

THE ORIGINAL MIND

There can be but one only Original Mind, or no more than one Understanding Being Self-Existent; all other minds whatsoever partaking of one Original Mind; and being as it were stamped with the impression or signature of one and the same seal. . . .

Truths are not multiplied by the diversity of minds that apprehend them; because they are all but participations of one and the same Original or Archetypal Mind and Truth.

As the same face may be reflected in several glasses; and the image of the same sun may be in a thousand eyes at once beholding it; the one and the same voice may be in a thousand ears listening to it; so when innumerable created minds have the same ideas of things, and understand the same truths, it is but one and the same Eternal Light that is reflected in them all (that Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world), or the same voice of that one everlasting Word that is never silent, re-echoed by them. Thus was it concluded by Themistius that one man, by teaching, could not possibly beget in the mind of another the very same notions, conceptions and knowledges which himself had in his own mind, . . . were not the minds both of the teacher and of the learner as it were printed and stamped alike. As also that measure of truth between them, no more than any common rule of their wills; nor indeed how they should have any knowledge or understanding at all.

We conclude therefore that from the nature of mind and knowledge, it is demonstrable that there can be but one Original and Self-existent Mind or Understanding Being, from which all other minds were derived.

—*Ralph Cudworth.*